Drop in Forest Cover

728. SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE :
SHRI SUDHIR GIRI :
SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA :
SHRI GIRIDHAR GAMANG :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Supreme Court on February 23, 1998 expressed grave concern over the alarming drop in dense forest cover in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether according to the Supreme Court 17,000 square kilometres of forests have vanished in two years from 1995-97 and the Centre and the defaulting States will have to explain the reasons for this decline;

(d) the steps, the Government propose to take to meet the warning issued by the Supreme Court; and

(e) the names of the defaulting States, besides Andhra Pradesh and the action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The recently published State of Forest Report, 1997, presents the dynamics of the forest cover of the country based on the satellite data of 1993-95. According to this report, there has been an overall reduction of 5,482 square kilometres as compared to 1995 assessment. However, there has been a reduction of 17,777 square kilometres of the dense forest cover. The Supreme Court has directed the defaulting States to explain the position of their respective States with regard to the deforestation.

(d) and (e) The Ministry has requested the concerned State/UT Governments to take serious note of the depletion of forest cover and to make an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to the depletion of forest cover, to evolve effective strategy and action programme for arresting the trend so as to increase the forest cover in the coming years. Ministry has also requested Planning Commission and all State/UT Governments for increasing the allocation for forestry sector. Besides Andhra Pradesh the other States in which forest cover has decreased as per State of Forest report, 1997 are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Siphoning off of Funds

729. SHRI SUDHIR GIRI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Many private schools siphoned off huge sums" appearing in the 'Indian Express' dated March 16, 1998;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government of N.C.T. of Delhi have informed that on receipt of complaints from Parents, Parents Teachers-Associations and reports in the Press, a Special Inspection of 16 schools was conducted as per the provisions of Delhi School Education Act, 1973. Inspection Reports revealed that additional funds collected by these schools have been utilised in violation of provisions of Delhi School Education Act and Rules, 1973. Consequently, directions were issued under relevant provisions of Delhi School Education Act, 1973 by the Director of Education to all unaided recognised schools to regulate the collection of fees and funds by the management. This order was stayed by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi vide its interim order dated 11.12.1997 and the Court permitted the unaided schools to enhance the fee which they were charging on 31.3.1997 by a maximum of 40% with effect from 1.4.1997 till the disposal of writ petitions.

During the period of regular hearing of the petitions, the academic session ended on 31.3.1998 and most of the unaided schools enhanced the fees with effect from 1.4.1998 without any express permission of the Hon'ble Court. This step of unaided schools has been challenged by the Abhibhawak Mahasangh and the Hon'ble Court heard the said petition on 4.5.1998 and reiterated its order dated 11.12.1997. The matter is still sub-judice.

[Translation]

Subsidy to Farmers in Power Sector

730. KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether subsidy provided to farmers in Power Sector is being withdrawn by the Government;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to compensate farmers in any other way; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.